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BOOK REVIEWS

The Motivation of School Work. By H. B. WILSON and G. M. WILSON.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916. Pp. ix+265. \$1.25.

With the attempt to make education universal there has arisen a problem which was not acute so long as the children who were to be educated were allowed to select themselves by their aptitude for, and their interest in, the work which the school offered them. It is the problem not simply of leading them to the water, but of making them drink. The process of making children drink, commonly called motivation, resolves itself into finding out what the child likes to do, and hitching the things we think he ought to learn to do to these things. The problem of the book before us, then, is to show how the work of the various subjects taught in the school may be so related to those ends which the child naturally desires that he will do that work with enthusiasm.

The practical part of the book, which comprises about five-sixths of it, is devoted to full, detailed illustration of the actual procedure by which the various school tasks may be motivated. These illustrations are commonly the reports of devices which have been successfully put into practice. The "fundamental" subjects—language, composition, history, geography, and arithmetic—are treated in detail. Writing, spelling, music, drawing, home economics, manual training, agriculture, and nature-study are treated more briefly. These chapters abound in practicable and useful suggestions regarding methods by which school work may be made more significant to the child than it usually is, and hence may awaken him to greater activity. The practical recommendations are well balanced and sane.

The theoretical discussions in the first part of the book are not so clear or judicious as are the practical parts. The authors express extreme views, which would not meet with general agreement on the part of students of education, when they exalt the importance of motivation by denying the existence of fatigue in the school, or of general training. The discussion of plateaus in the learning-curve does not quite do justice to the experimental evidence, and it is not clear how the difference in the curves of forgetting of acts of skill and of associations relates to motivation. But the value of adjusting the work of the school to the child's natural impulses does not stand or fall with the conclusions on these points, and teachers and administrators will unquestionably find this book very useful for the wealth of suggestion for practical procedure which it contains.

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